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# THE HISTORY OF TORTURE

A STUDY OF CRUELTY, THE UGLIEST IMPULSE IN MAN

By JOSEPH McCABE

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## INTRODUCTION

Cruelty is the ugliest impulse in man, and the deliberate torture of other humans, whether from sadism, vindictiveness, or as a judicial process, is its vilest expression. Yet, while we have whole libraries on what is called vice, there is—if we ignore a short sketchy account in G. R. Scott's (improperly titled) "History of Torture"—only one book in any language on the long and poignant story of its use. This one book, in fact, Franz Helbing's "Die Tortur" (1903) is so little known that the writer (or reviser) of the article on torture in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, a leading professor of international law, refers to it as a work of "K. Kelbing" and has clearly never read it. Yet, torture is predominantly a vice of the civilized period. We find it, naturally, among the children of Nature, in whom the light of intelligence and idealism is still struggling to birth, but not so extensively that we can plead that it is due in us to an impulse deeply-rooted in human nature by ages of barbarism. This darkest stain on man's record has this singular distinction that it became deeper and broader when the race passed into a higher civilization, was most repulsive in the shining days of the European Renaissance, spread once more to an appalling extent (under Nazism) in our own time, and is still found under the refined and virtuous rulers of such countries as China, Greece, and Spain, and their spiritual guides.

Three other features of it that are not noticed by Helbing and the learned encyclopedia-writers deserve the attention of every social student of human behavior. It came into the stream of European-Ameri-

can culture, not (as it did in China) from an enviroing barbarism, but from the same source as our main religious ideas and moral ideals.

In a recent work, "The Evolution of the Virtue of Chastity" (Halderman-Julius, 25c), I showed that this ascetic conception of life originated in and spread from Persia, and few historians fail to lay a garland on the tomb of ancient Persia in gratitude for its introduction of spiritual religion and a higher standard of virtue. Here I will show that it was from this same Persia that Europe derived that casuistic insensibility to the horror of torture which for a thousand years deeply tainted its life and is still one of the chief reasons why we so easily reconcile ourselves to the savagery of war.

Moreover, while the Greeks and Romans at least restricted the use of torture and began to listen to the voice of humanity, the evil became fouler than ever in the Christian Era—foulest of all at the very height of the power of the Church of Rome—and was used in the interest of religion.

Finally, it ought to interest the modern world to know that, as the experts are so far agreed that even our tainted encyclopedia articles admit this, it was Voltaire and a group of Voltairean rulers, jurists, and writers in various countries who awakened the conscience of Europe and led to the general abolition of torture; and it was overwhelmingly in Catholic lands that this sordid implement of power was used again, and by the white hands of kings, nobles, and priests, whenever or wherever medieval conditions were restored.

## 1. HOW THE TAIN'T CAME TO EUROPE

The comparative failure of civilization after 6,000 years of experience and education, to control man's behavior in the social groups is often explained on spurious grounds. It is sometimes said, now that the myth of a primitive curse is generally rejected, that our science of evolution means that we have inherited "animal passions" and impulses to violence that are as old as the hills and, like the hills, will take ages to remove.

The truth is that our race has developed from a branch of the animal world, the higher apes, which was vegetarian and, in its arboreal life, was far removed from the strife of most of the other animals. It is true that our immediate ancestor quit the trees and had to defend himself with sticks and stones, but we gather from the placid life of the lowest surviving fragments of the prehistoric age that he maintained the unconscious virtue of his ape-ancestors. There was, naturally, a serious modification of his impulses when he began to hunt and kill his fellow animals, but we must not imagine him stumbling to the threshold of civilization with a proneness to torture that it would take millennia to eradicate.

The earliest Hindus and Chinese even, much less the early Sumerians and Egyptians, seem, as far as we can discover, to have been less addicted to torture than their descendants. This seems to be true also of the early Greeks and Romans; while the Teutonic barbarians who fathered most of the peoples of Europe and America did not in their "savage" days practice a tithe of the cruelty and torture that disgraced their Christian descendants until the 18th century. "Wanton cruelty," says Professor Westermarck in his masterly survey of the life of lower peoples, "is not a general characteristic of savage justice."

Therefore I do not propose to

spend any time describing the forms of torture which travelers have reported among the sub-civilized peoples of the earth. Not only is it generally much less than our usual name for them, "savages," disposes us to expect—we rarely find them at a level of real savagery as low as that of medieval Europe—but they do not contribute anything to the main stream of the culture of the race.

The Red Indians and the Chinese occur to the mind at once in this connection, and it is curious that we do find the practice at its worst, as far as the lower peoples are concerned, in America and Asia.

Since the Indians reached America from Eastern Asia one is tempted to wonder whether the tribes that crossed the North Pacific did not bring the horrid practice with them, but if, as I assume, the Eskimo are survivors of the first wave of invasion it does not seem probable. They are far from savage.

Early explorers like Captain Kane found great difficulty in explaining to them what Americans and Europeans meant by war, and it is said that when two of them quarrelled they poured their feelings into scurrilous verse about each other and declaimed this publicly in a sort of contest, to the entertainment of their neighbors. The Mexican or the Bolivian delegate at UN might represent to the delegates of the four "great" powers that this would be an admirable way of settling their differences; or they might, as old Carlyle suggested long ago, sit with their pipes round a table and blow smoke in each other's eyes.

We do certainly find much cruelty and torture even in the Amerindian civilizations. It is said by some authorities that the Indians developed the worst of their practices in their struggle with the whites, but the Aztec code was cruel. We read that a man incurred the death-sentence if he dressed as a woman,

and the sacred summits of their pyramid-temples were red with blood. "The greater part of their code might have been written in blood," says Professor Westermarck, in his "Origin and Development of Moral Ideas;" in which, by the way, he has no chapter on torture or cruelty, the greatest of man's moral aberrations.

The Chinese have the reputation of being the world's worst torturers, though this is largely due to the fact that American and European historians now politely refrain from mentioning the barbarous tortures that were inflicted in medieval, and even in the early part of modern, Europe. The classic Death of a Thousand Cuts, in which the executioner has a basket of knives, each labelled for some part of the body, and cuts away small parts of it until the victim collapses, is less horrible than the Quaresima (40 Days) of certain Italian princes of the Middle Ages, which kept the tortured victim alive and suffering for 40 days. The rat-torture—enclosing the man in a basket with hungry rats—has parallels elsewhere. Chinese torturers certainly thought out some novel slow tortures—for instance, binding a man to a chair with a hole in it so that a young bamboo will grow up through his anus—but torture was not worse at any time in China than it was under the Normans in England, the medieval despots in Italy, or in Europe generally for a thousand years. There is reason to think that it was introduced into China by one of its barbaric conquerors, and certainly it was not practiced in the best ages, such as that of the Confucian Tai-tsung. While, in the 7th century of the Christian Era, Europe and the Byzantine empire were sinking to the barbaric level, the Tang Emperors devised in China a treatment of criminals that shames that of America and Britain today. While torture was repugnant to the followers of the atheistic Confucius and Meng-tse, no Christian leader condemned it until the second half of the 19th century. European travelers found savage torture in India also in the 17th and 18th centuries, but here again, we are told,

it was not sanctioned in early Hindu law, and it was certainly not used under Buddhist rulers like Asoka.

But, as I said, none of these had any influence on the extraordinary growth of cruelty in the European character. Nor, in this respect, can we ascribe any influence to the older empires, Egypt and Babylonia. Egyptologists like Breasted do not mention torture, and writers on torture give contradictory views. Helbing says that Egyptian law condemned a man to lose his nose for adultery, but from the freedom of their songs and stories, we may well doubt if men did fear to incur such a mutilation. It is clear that there was not, either in law or in private life, the least approach to the cruelty of medieval life. In the case of Babylon we have the law-code of King Hammurabi (about 1900 B.C.) and, while it shows a surprising regard for social justice, it contains harsh penal clauses. It includes the *lex talionis*—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and also enjoins a long series of mutilations for different offenses. A young man who disowns his foster-father or foster-mother, if they are of priestly rank, shall have his tongue cut out. If he quits their house for that of his own father his eyes must be cut out (192 & 193). A nurse who suckles a child without the knowledge of its father and mother loses her breasts (194). A son who strikes his father has his hands cut off (295). The "law of retaliation" then follows in 20 clauses of detail and is so severe that a surgeon who destroys a man's eye in an operation on it must lose his hands, and a builder who raises a faulty house that kills the householder's child in its fall must lose a child of his own. Experts, however, gather from the wording of some clauses that they were not enforced even in the time of Hammurabi—they seem to have been old laws of the tribe—and we do not know how far this may apply to the harsher laws.

In any case, beyond handing on the law of retaliation and other clauses to the Jews, together with the myths of the early chapters of Genesis, the Babylonians were no more responsible than the Egyptians for what happened later in

Europe. The Jews themselves had some cruel punishments but not the mutilations of the Hammurabi code. In the early times a woman was burned for misconduct (Genesis, 38,24) and there were two cruel forms of the ordeal, but there were no tortures in the least comparable to those which were inflicted on the Jews themselves in the Middle Ages.

One of the ancient civilizations, that of Persia, was far more addicted to torture than any of these, and as this also came to have a deeper influence on the peoples of Europe than any of the others we may consider it the probable source or chief source of the development of cruelty in the west. In my book on the origin of the law of chastity I explained how Persia acquired this influence and transmitted the ascetic conception of sex to Europe. Upon the ruins of the Babylonian, Assyrian, and Egyptian empires the Persians built one that was larger and richer than any of them. It stretched over Asia Minor to touch the fringe of the Greek world and over Palestine and Syria to Egypt. The Jews who were liberated by the Persians from captivity naturally give King Cyrus and his people a high character; just as Moslem priests later gave a spurious reputation to the medieval Persian monarch Harun al Rashid (Harun the Just): a man of hot sensual blood in his earlier years but cold-blooded cruelty and piety in his repentant age. One or two Greek writers also gave a high character to Cyrus and his people, much as Tacitus held up the German barbarians as models to the Roman people and gave an entirely fallacious account of their ways.

But other Greek writers, the historian and traveler Herodotus and the religious philosopher Plutarch, give us a more reliable account, and, whatever personal virtues Cyrus had, there was a tradition of great cruelty in his country. As I said, modern historians are too polite to tell the full truth when some of it is ugly or dishonoring and you may read experts on Persia (Sykes, Rogers, etc.) who do not give you any idea of this cruelty. Professor Breasted, who was not a specific expert on Persia—he was primarily

an Egyptologist—even has a flowery passage in which he points out the strange contrast between the barren and rugged mountains on which the Persians lived and what he calls their beautiful religion and moral idealism. I explain elsewhere that I fail to see any beauty in a religion that explains the world as the battle-ground of an infinite god and a supreme devil and is mainly responsible for the sordid belief in eternal torment or for a moral idealism that imposed the law of chastity, with all its hypocrisy and suffering, on the world for 2,000 years. However that may be, Herodotus, a contemporary, described the ancient Persians as "shameless" and drunken, and Plutarch, a most conscientious collector of facts, while admitting a few questionable rumors about them—such as that they married their mothers and allowed their King to get drunk only on one day of the year, the feast of Mithra (Christmas Day)—reliably shows that they had the worst vein of cruelty among the ancient nations.

How far what he says about them applies to their barbaric days before the time of Cyrus he does not make clear, but cruel practices in their early civilization must be an inheritance from the pre-civilized years. To those years belong "the laws of the Medes and Persians," which are still often mentioned in literature as unique in their severity. We may confidently say that it is from that time that they got their viler forms of capital punishment, such as burying men in pits full of ashes so that they would toss about until they were gradually choked, crucifying them, or even tearing the skin off their bodies while they still lived. They seem also to have practiced those mutilations—cutting out eyes, cutting off noses, etc.—which were to become appallingly common in later Europe. Herodotus says that they had a tribal custom of sacrificing youths and maidens to Pluto, the god of the underworld, by burying them alive. Pluto is, of course, the Greek name for this god, but apparently there was a corresponding deity among the ancient Persians—clearly the spirit of vegetation or

Mother Earth goddess reduced to a lower rank—and we may see in this a clue to the zoroastrian idea of a supreme devil and a pit of eternal fire for him and his nyrmidons and the souls of the wicked; primary elements of the "beautiful religion" which was, through Christianity, to be accepted by even the most learned men of Europe for 1,500 years.

It does not matter whether or no we trace this vein of cruelty to the pre-civilized Persians, for it was in their imperial days that they contributed important elements to the main human tradition, and their historical record is fouled with great cruelty. Plutarch in his famous "Lives of Illustrious Men" gives us a sketch of the life of the Persian monarch Artaxerxes II, who came into contact and conflict with the Greeks. His younger brother, Cryus (the younger), led a revolt, and in suppressing it he condemned a certain noble to the axe. But this was too lenient for the king's mother, who had the man handed over to her, and she had him horribly tortured for 10 days. His eyes were cut out and molten brass was poured into his ears. This woman,

apparently an ignorant and superstitious hag who clung to the old ways, had boys and girls buried alive in honor of the god of the underworld. This was about the year 400 B.C. in the great days of Persian imperialism. But the tradition of cruelty—crucifying, impaling, flaying alive and mutilation—persisted in the country. Alexander conquered it, then the Asiatic Parthians, who would encourage the cruelty. In any case it was as conspicuous as ever in the New Persian Empire (226-652 A.D.), and the Byzantine or Greek Christian Empire founded by Constantine was its nearest neighbor. When we find the cruelty which was to sink to such depths in Christian Europe first developing in its uglier forms in the Byzantine Empire, from which the practices passed to Europe, we have little difficulty in recognizing that the chief historic source was the same as that of the idea of the diabolical character of sex, a supreme devil, and an eternal punishment of men—itself one of the worst forms of torture that the imagination ever spawned—chiefly for offenses of the flesh.

## 2. TORTURE IN ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME

Strong as the evidence is for this theory of the guilt of Persia you will find a persistent tendency of our modern historical writers to exonerate the Christian Era in part by claiming that it just carried on the traditions of Greece and Rome, of which the high legal repute was bound to influence it. This is largely due to the fact that, as I said, there is no scientific study of the history of torture. Helbing's work is chaotic in the arrangement of its material, and Scott's slight sketch is negligible. European and American jurists who refer to torture, chiefly in the articles in our encyclopedias, rely on Helbing and (as you notice in their lists of recommended books) on older writers who had no knowledge of modern history. Their work is further vitiated by the fact that when they speak of torture in ancient Rome they draw on the graphic and harrowing descriptions of torture in the stories

of the martyrs, the overwhelming mass of which are recognized even by Catholic martyrologists to be forgeries. The grille on which "St. Lawrence" is supposed to have been roasted (as still told in every Sunday School), the wheel on which "St. Catherine" was broken, and dozens of other picturesque and familiar forms of torment are, as far as concerns the ancient Romans, purely mythical; though they, or some of them, may have been in actual use in the Christian 6th and 7th centuries when the martyr-stories were forged. Even Helbing takes some forms of torture from these stories.

Some of our professors of law, we shall find, instead of pointing out these weaknesses of their predecessors develop historical vices of their own. They suppress the alleviations which the Roman lawyers gradually won in the use of torture and, in the interest of religion, they



falsify the action of the Church and make it appear that the Middle Ages just restored Roman law. They mislead—in this respect innocently—the reader by defining torture as simply the legal use of cruel methods of getting confessions of guilt and the names of accomplices, and they ignore that mass of extra-legal torturing which reveals the character of the peoples of Europe even more clearly than the legal procedure does; and they thus completely fail, or indeed calculatingly refuse, to let the reader see the most significant feature of the history of torture—that it was worse in the Christian Era than at any other time and that it increased in its repulsiveness when the church grew in power and claims to have created our modern civilization. I will return later to this point.

Greece we may dismiss briefly, for it is not disputed that, as we should expect, the main body of the Greeks were little inclined to torture. It was permitted in law to torture slave-witnesses, though we must remember that the body of slaves in Greece was far smaller than in Italy and better treated. It was a general feature of the older civilizations that slave-witnesses should be tortured as the truth could not otherwise be expected from them; though let me add at once that even in Rome, where there were restrictions on the practice, they suffered far less than the immense body of serfs in the Dark Age. Under Athenian law free citizens could not be tortured, and it is sheer pedantry to waste time on the few disputable and exceptional cases that are alleged. Smith's Classical Dictionary says, after stating the law, "what is more to the purpose the restriction (to slaves) was fully maintained in practice." Foreigners, though not under Greek law, were by custom equally exempt from torture because they were free men. The Rev. Professor Mahaffy has several pages on it in his "Social Life in Greece" (240) and tells the worst that he can find about the torture of slaves, usually on the rack. He admits that such men as Aristotle mildly approved the torture on the plausible ground that a slave would be so much afraid of

what his master would do to him after giving his evidence that torture was the only way to secure the truth. He counts this "the only case of real stupidity I can bring against the Athenians," and says:

"I must add, however, in justice to Athens, that the torture was never inflicted for torture's sake (from vindictiveness) as among oriental despots or Roman Catholic Inquisitors, but from a blundering desire to elicit truth in evidence."

In one or two other Greek provinces, especially in hard and truculent Sparta, torture was much more fully used, but these, and certainly Athens, had no influence on the later appalling use of torture in Christendom.

Torture in the Roman Republic Empire (which began in 31 B.C.) requires careful consideration. Not only has a long tradition of Christian apologetics led to a general exaggeration of the faults of the pagan character but the attempt is made, as I said, to extenuate the tortures of the Middle Ages by saying that they were due to a restoration of Roman law, which is a gross misrepresentation. The law under the Republic, during the few centuries B.C., was the same as the Athenian. Only slaves could be put to the torture; and it is agreed that even this does not appear in the earliest law, the Law of the Twelve Tables, so that some trace it to Greek influence. It is agreed also that the great skeptical orator and moralist Cicero repeatedly (see his speech "For Sulla," c. 28, for instance) condemned the practice; as several Romans (Seneca, Ulpian, etc.) did under the Empire, and no Christian leader ever did. We can easily believe that the generals in their wars against the barbarians in the Civil Wars used a good deal of torture but this was before the beginning of the Christian Era.

The question of torture under the Emperors is usually so treated that one gets the impression that it became much worse, whereas in principle the situation improved. The one respect in which we can speak of a deterioration is that now that there were monarchic rulers, these

made treason the worst crime in the calendar and decreed that freemen (or emancipated slaves, who now became numerous) as well as slaves or men of infamous life (like gladiators) might be tortured. Tyrants like Caligula and Nero made use of vile tortures, though we must remember that the worse tortures attributed to Nero, such as coating Christians with pitch and making living torches of them, are taken from a disputed passage of Tacitus or lives of the Martyrs. None of these worse horrors were sanctioned in Roman law, except crucifixion; and there is a good deal of dispute about the nature of this punishment, some authorities denying that the victims were nailed to the cross or posts. The recognized forms were a sort of rack, whips loaded with little balls of lead or iron, iron hooks (such as were used to drag bodies out of the arena at the amphitheatre), or tight cords on the limbs. Some writers quote the statement of the satirist Juvenal that Roman ladies used, for their sadistic satisfaction, to hire the public executioner to torture their slaves in their palaces, but it has long been recognized that Juvenal, who hated the rich, heaped together all the gossip that lingered from the generation before his own and must not be quoted as a reliable witness.

We must remember, too, that the number of slaves fell considerably under the Emperors, and that under the Stoic lawyers and Antonine Emperors there was a good deal of legislation to protect the slave. In particular he was protected from wanton cruelty, and Hadrian (the most notoriously atheistic of the emperors) applied this law mercilessly to rich mistresses. We know that the Stoics and Epicureans generally condemned torture. "It forces even the innocent to lie," said Seneca, and Ulpian condemned it as "untrustworthy, perilous and deceptive." St. Augustine approved of it, and not one of the Fathers of the Church, popes, bishops, or councils, as I will tell presently, condemned it.

But the chief defect of encyclopedia articles on the subject is that they either omit altogether or tell only in part the restrictions which,

from the time of Hadrian onward, were put on the use of torture. I have shown in other connections how from the latter part of the 1st century onward a finer feeling showed itself in Roman practice. Slavery was attacked, the position of woman was improved, a fine school-system was developed, and philanthropic work multiplied remarkably. This expressed itself also in the check of torture, and Professor Williams gave the Romans full credit for it in the last but one edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. "The rules of procedure," he said, "were conceived in a spirit of as much fairness as such rules could be;" and he gives a long list of these rules. His words and most of his list are, of course, cut out of the last edition. The "reviser," Professor Keeton, professor of international law at London University and regular lecturer to the chief Ethical Society, is not a Roman Catholic but is a zealous member of the Church of England. He could hardly venture to cut out entirely these important restrictions on torture. He tells how the amount of torture was left to the discretion of the judge, and the judge himself suffered if it was such as to endanger the life or sacrifice a limb of a slave; that torture was to be used only when ordinary evidence was insufficient to convict a criminal; that leading questions must not be asked; and that except in case of treason the evidence of a single witness did not justify the use of torture. But Professor Williams had added, and Keeton suppressed, that prisoners of tender age or weak constitution were to be the first in a batch to be tortured; that the torture could be repeated only if the accused made contradictory statements or persisted in a denial in the face of proved facts; and especially that an accused could appeal against a sentence of torture, even the slave being empowered to do this through his master.

Still more censurable is the conduct of Professor Keeton when, passing from the pagan to the Christian period, he says that, "At first the Church was definitely opposed to torture." Professor Williams had merely quoted an isolated

synod of the Roman Church in the year 384 as opposed to torture. Professor Keeton repeats this—calling it “the Church”—without any attempt to verify it. In point of fact there is no such synod in either Baronius, Mansi, or Hefele, the three great Catholic collections, and, as far as I can discover, no council of the Roman or any other branch of the Church ever condemned torture.

The bishops induced Constantine to strike crucifixion out of the law, but the motive was professedly religious; a criminal must not die as Christ had died. On the other hand they created a new crime, heresy, for suspicion of which a man might be tortured, and also in the case of any layman, slave or free, who struck a priest or bishop in church. After what I said in my last book about Christian morals in the 4th and 5th centuries, no one will expect an improvement of either law or practice. In fights of rival candidates for the papacy 160 were killed in a day and an unknown number wounded or mutilated. In the 50-year struggle of Arians and Trinitarians the most atrocious tortures were used, especially on young women, by both sides. The Christian Emperor Valentinian was a brute who fed offenders to bears that he kept in his palace. The greatest of the Christian Emperors, Theodosius, was guilty of a great massacre that shocked the world. Constantine himself had had his wife, son, and boy-nephew cruelly murdered.

But before we move on to the Dark Age let us glance at the Greek or eastern (or Byzantine) half of the Empire. It was chiefly through this, since its territory joined that of the New Persia, that worse forms of torture and mutilation spread over the west. “Its history is written in blood,” says Helbing. For instance, instead of further modifying the use of torture which it took over with Roman law, it added the more exquisite tortures and the savage mutilations which it learned

from oriental despots. It was mainly in the Greek world that torture—crushing the breasts of “sacred virgins,” making them sit, nude, on heated iron stools, etc.—was lavishly used in the religious struggle even in the 4th century, and it was at Thessalonica that Theodosius, for an affront to his inordinate vanity, had 7,000 men, women and children attracted to the Circus by promise of a show and butchered by his soldiers. It was in Alexandria that the learned elderly lady Hypatia, the most distinguished woman in several centuries, had the flesh cut from her bones with broken crockery by the monks. From that time (415 A.D.) the Byzantine chronicle is sordid; and remember that there was here no invasion by barbarians. I have written a large volume on it and could fill a chapter with atrocities. Castration, unknown in the older civilizations, now became common, and would so remain in Europe until the 16th century. Blindings by the knife or hot iron became even more common; the “great” empress “St.” Irene herself having the eyes of her son cut out so as to keep the power in her own hands. Noses and ears were cut off. Women were built into walls and starved slowly to death.

In the 6th and 7th centuries the whole ghastly variety of tortures, in process of law as in daily occurrence, was developed in the Catholic east. It is probably from these that the contemporary forgers of stories of the martyrs, who were for the most part Greek, got so many of their ideas of torture. Juridical writers who try to soften the guilt of the Middle Ages in this respect by saying that the increase of torture was due to a revival of Roman law and do not say a word about the Byzantine horrors, or reflect only that the Justinian Code was little, if any, worse than the Theodosian, gravely mislead their readers in regard to the social history of Europe and its relation to religion.

### 3. CRUELTY IN THE DARK AGE

Since no work on torture is available to the English reader, and

probably Helbing's German work is now accessible to only a few stu-

dents, the man who desires to inquire into this important subject is restricted to the articles in the encyclopedias. It is curious how few even in our age, when so much emphasis is laid on the influence of Christianity in civilization, seek knowledge on this point. A vast amount has been written on the question whether the new religion made Europe more moral in the sexual sense, but there has been a remarkable neglect of what is, on our modern standards, a far sounder criterion. Did the new religion reduce or augment the great volume of cruelty in even civilized lands? This little book will show that indisputably there was more cruelty and torture in Christendom during more than 1,000 years than in any other civilization. But the writers on torture in our encyclopedias, who are always Christian jurists, conceal that fact by insisting that torture means the legal use of cruel methods of extorting a confession or the names of accomplices from an accused. They then dilate on the cruelty of Roman law, the codes of which we still have, declare that they find little trace of torture during the Dark Age, and explain the reappearance of torture from about 1200 A.D. as mainly due to a revival of Roman law. They do not make it clear that the tortures prescribed in law from the 13th century to the 17th are, just at the time of the greatest power of the Church, far worse than any that were admitted in Roman law and were without the restrictions of the Roman code; and they almost entirely ignore the historical facts, which do not belong to their branch of learning. I have found some of these professors of law extraordinarily ignorant of the facts—which did not restrain them from making dogmatic statements about them—whereas if we want to judge character and the influences on character in various ages we look chiefly to the volume of cruelty in daily life, especially in the Dark Age, when written law was so scanty but cruelty, as we should expect, was appalling.

There is, for instance, a work on torture in England by L. A. Parry. Torture, he says, was never admitted in English Common Law, and it

was one of the rights won from the crown in the Magna Carta that no free Englishman could be tortured. This was often repeated until the 16th century when brutal whipping and mutilation were increasingly prescribed by law. He admits, almost casually, that in practice there was a good deal of torture in Norman times (late 11th and 12th centuries) and later, but this is entirely misleading except to a student of law. The tortures inflicted on the English by the Norman Kings, barons, and abbots, out of sheer greed, were far more appalling, as we shall see, than anything in the records of the ancient pagan civilizations, and before that date the serfs had been most cruelly treated by the barons, as they were in the rest of Europe. It is essential in any history that has a social interest, which is the only history worth reading, to consider both legal and extra-legal torture.

As it is undeniable that the population of Europe was brutalized after the fall of Rome and so remained for at least seven or eight centuries we hardly need proof that there was no diminution of cruelty in this sense. The new religion taught brotherhood and mutual respect, as every Greek or Roman moralist and all the new religions have done, but above all it insisted on chastity; and if, as I showed in my previous book, the new Europe from the first took so little notice of its teaching about chastity, we do not look in so brutal an age for any improvement as regards cruelty. Here we have one of the deepest differences between the new humanism and the old theology. I still have the two volumes (1,700 quarto pages) from which, 60 years ago, I learned "moral theology," or all that the Roman Church has to say about virtues and vices. It deals extensively and vehemently with vice while it devotes only 10 temperate lines to cruelty and does not mention torture. This moral obliquity explains why *the Church never condemned torture* just as it never condemned slavery. I have read all writers on torture, and not one of them quotes such a condemnation, while in the later Middle Ages, as we shall see, Popes and Councils in-

sisted on the torture of heretics. I have explained that the Roman Council of the year 384 which Professor Keeton quotes in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* as condemning torture—one synod in thousands would not in any case be “the Church”—is a myth; and equally spurious is Keeton’s statement that Pope Innocent III condemned the ordeal, the form of trial used in the Dark Age, and this necessarily led to a revival of the Roman procedure of torturing the accused. All that the Pope and the Lateran (Roman) Council of 1215 decreed about ordeals was that—referring to one of its forms only, the duel—priests must not fight or be present at duels. By implication the duel itself is permitted. I might add that Keeton is equally wrong in saying that Innocent IV insisted on the torture of heretics in 1282. Innocent IV had died 30 years earlier. The date was 1252. As the article in the *Britannica* is practically the only discussion of torture that is available to the general public I must give this warning: but I am tempted to add that if I made as many mistakes on one page as this learned professor of international law does there might be some substance in the contention of some professors that I write on too many subjects to be accurate and that the inquirer should confine his reading to “experts.”

Several writers explain the scarcity of legal references to torture before the year 1200 by this general use of the ordeal instead of trial. The forms of it will be familiar. An accused instead of being tried before a court sought “the judgment of God.” After Mass (presumably on Sundays) and under the direction of the priest, and in the presence of the whole village, he plunged his arm in boiling water (or oil) and fished out a ring from the bottom, lifted up and held for some time a piece of red-hot iron, walked on fire or hot irons, or was flung into a deep tank of water. If he was not injured in the first three cases—folk seem to have developed a fine art of getting off lightly—he was innocent, but if he floated when he was thrown into the tank he was guilty. The water registered the

judgment of God by rejecting him. It seems hard that the innocent person should sink while the guilty float. But Archbishop Hincmar of France, the most learned and distinguished prelate of the 4th century, though he believed in the ordeal as naively as any peasant, tells us that a rope was tied around the victim, and the innocent was fished out from the bottom before he could drown.

This crude form of judgment which survived in the duel until the last century and now survives only in the German word for judgment (*urtheil*) and as the word for a painful personal experience of any kind was a barbaric practice—it was found amongst savages in most parts of the world—resumed by a supposedly civilized people. If the peoples of Europe had sought the judgment of God as the Burmese or the Dyaks of Borneo did, which would be just as logical an application of their creed, we should describe it as a symptom only of their low intellectual and social condition. Complainant and defendant in Burma were given candles of exactly the same size and the party whose candle burned out first was proved to be the liar. In Borneo each put some sort of shell-fish on a plate, a little lime-juice was poured on them, and the party whose animal-champion stirred first lost the case. But those Christian folk of Europe had recourse during nearly 1,000 years—for the duel persisted when other forms were dropped and the bloody encounters of Knights were often “trials by combat”—to torture in order to discover guilt; and the Church, its priests presiding at the performances, encouraged them to believe that God chose these brutal practices as the form in which to deliver his verdict. Millions of people must have suffered. Gentry or Knights fought with swords, serfs with heavy cudgels. In places, if one party was a woman, the man fought her from a hole in the ground while she circled round him with a heavy stone in the sleeve of her smock. Abbots had trained swordsmen to fight the duel for them if their unjust seizure of property was disputed, and a woman might engage

a Knight (as Scott's "Ivanhoe") to vindicate her honor by a bloody and generally fatal encounter. No sophistry about "simple faith" and "trust in God" can conceal the fact that a horrible amount of cruelty was caused century after century because Christendom was too barbaric to have decent codes of law and an administration of justice.

This is one of the two monstrous facts about the Dark Age that are concealed from the modern reader by jurists who, looking only for codes of law, assure him that they find little torture in the Dark Age. They have not time to read the chronicles. In that of the monk Rudolf Glaber of the 11th century, for instance, I found a story of "judicial procedure" in the city of Laon, then one of the first cities in France. A canon of the cathedral was justly suspected of burglary of the church-treasures, and when he would not confess he was three times made to hang by his arms by the civic and episcopal authorities and, when he was taken down racked with pain, he was refreshed by pouring boiling oil over him. The literature of the 9th and 10th centuries, in particular, reeks with cruelty, but it had begun at least by the 6th century. Bishop Gregory of Tours gives us in his "History of the Franks," an appalling picture of life as he saw it in his own age, the 6th century, and country. A princess with a grievance against her mother kills her by poisoning the wine used in the sacrament, and she is then herself boiled in a bath of boiling water. Morals, in the sexual sense, very few of the Kings, Queens, and nobles and even bishops seem to know anything about and their cruelty is just as flagrant. Of the wife of the Bishop of le Mans, who was as barbarous as she was, Gregory says: "Often did she cut off men's virile members together with the skin of the belly, and she burned with red-hot bricks the privy-parts of women," especially of nuns who hid the treasury of the convent. One nun, of royal blood, turns brigand and has her band of cut-throats to kill and torture. One queen sends a priest to murder her rival, but is detected and his hands or feet are cut off.

The threatened queen then sends two bishops with poisoned knives to dispatch the other lady, and these lose their hands, ears and noses before they are killed. It is one long category of murder, torture and rape. But our juridical writers find little torture.

From that time on Europe and the Greek world are so sodden with mutilation—the removal of testicles, ears, eyes, tongues, hands and feet—that any crowd in a town must have looked picturesque. Rome was as bad as the provinces. "The Chronicle of the Popes," which is at least semi-official, itself says that the great and virtuous Pope Hadrian, one of the "good popes" had the eyes of two of the highest officials of his court cut out; and they had had a previous Pope blinded and tortured in other ways. For years tongues and eyes were cut out in the highest Papal circles in the fierce fights for the sacred office of Vicar of Christ. The "new history" says that, although by this time, the last quarter of the 8th century, there had been three full centuries for the barbarians to settle down, another branch, the Lombards, had recently come into Italy and was responsible for the savagery. But the highest authority on the subject Hodgkin ("Italy and Her Invaders") showed decades ago that these tortures were not borrowed from the Lombards, who, in defiance of the Popes, had set up a fair civilization in Italy, but, as I have said, from the Greeks or Byzantines. As to the contention that Charlemagne now conquered the Lombards for the Pope and inaugurated a Renaissance, it is a platitude of European history that the two centuries following the death of Charlemagne—who really extinguished the new civilization in Italy and civilized neither France nor Germany—were, if it is possible, worse than ever. A fairly full account is given in my "True History of the Roman Church (Haldeman-Jullius, \$3.95) and I must be content here with a few specimens of how even leading clerics then lived.

Abbot Carloman, grandson of Charlemagne and a professional brigand of the most revolting type, is condemned to have his eyes cut

out. Bishop Hinemar, another ruthless brigand though nephew of the great Archbishop Hinemar, the most notable statesman of the 9th century buys the protection of the Pope, but has his eyes cut out by the French court. The bishop of Naples, another consecrated brigand, is poisoned by a relative of the Pope (who clearly agreed), and, as the poison acts slowly, the man brushes his skull with a hammer. A group of Italian bishops dig up the corpse (nine months in the grave) of a Pope, solemnly try it in the Pope's palace, mutilate it, and throw it on the street. With such high clerical models, princes and nobles were appallingly busy cutting or burning out eyes or tongues and cutting off sex-organs (entire or only the glands) and all other removable parts and fiercely torturing their serfs for every offense. A French "noble" had a young man and a girl buried alive, tied together in a split tree trunk, because they ran off and got married when he wanted the girl. Monks had the soles of their feet roasted and nuns were raped and had their breasts tortured. Count Raoul d'Eurrux in 997 caused a revolt of his serfs by his brutality. He hamstrung all of them, cut out the eyes of some and knocked out the teeth of others, poured molten lead on them, tore them with red hot pincers, and impaled or buried alive many of them. Serfs had no redress and owners no check on their treatment of them. They could hardly be expected to be gentle to each other. When the bishop made his rounds and demanded public confession of their sins—the lists are in extant prayer-books—he asked such questions as whether they had cut off another man's testicles, ears, etc. And remember that outside Arab Spain, which was then at the height of its civilization, there was no surgery and medicine was a tragedy. You clapped clay (and anthrax) or molten pitch on your wounds.

This Dark Age is supposed by the less enlightened historians of Europe—their American colleagues have found that there never was a Dark Age—to end in the second part of the 11th century when the Age of Chivalry began. As a matter of

fact there was no change in the reign of brutality, and when writers like Professor Keeton say that they find little evidence of torture before 1215, they are still talking only of law-codes and closing their eyes to sodden masses of historical facts. France was the first country to experience the new civilizing influence or "balmier air" since it was the nearest country to Spain, and from Southern France it quickly spread to Normandy. From there, as everybody knows, the Duke and his Knights set sail in 1066 to conquer England, with a large company of priests and abbots who smelt the green pastures of the Anglo-Saxon Church. Just at that date, as schools were spreading from Spain, there was a great improvement in the writing of chronicles by monks, so we have lengthy and detailed accounts, by contemporaries, of this last chapter of the Dark Age (which was a grim reality) and first chapter of the Age of Chivalry (which is a pure myth).

We know these Norman Knights well from the lengthy "History of the West" of the monk Ordericus Vitalis, who was contemporary with them both in France and England. There seems to have been a great deal of sadism as well as a general practice of sodomy among them. However that may be, the record of cruelty both before and after the conquest has no parallel in history except in the foulest of barbaric invasions. The Talvas family was counted the third noblest in the Duchy of Normandy and was the source of the proud Earls of Shrewsbury of England. Count William, head of the house, before the Conquest even—apparently mad-drunk—fell on the guests at his wedding feast, and many of them left their noses, eyes, or testicles in his great castle. His daughter—ancestress of the illustrious Montgomerys (Earls of Shrewsbury), almost heads the list of female criminals in history. She led her own band of brigands, tortured with her own hands the breasts of nuns who had hidden their treasures, and pursued a career of crime for 30 years. Her husband, second only to the Conqueror himself in rank, was as vicious. Their son, Robert of Belleme, con-



trived to surpass them in cruelty. He often refused to let his rich or noble captives—taken in peace, not war—ransom themselves so that he could prolong his sadistic enjoyment of their tortures in his dungeons. Cutting off noses, etc., was too tame for him. He particularly loved castrating his captives, whether nobles, monks, or merchants. He had 34 castles, all fouled in this way, and thousands of men of his own type—all sodomists—and he passed to England to become the Third Earl of Shrewsbury, one of the highest nobles of the land, and continued his practices there.

There were the leaders of the "blue-blooded" Normans who accompanied William the Bastard to England. Since the Danish invasion had ceased it had become fat and rich, and all of them, monks and nuns, barons, merchants, and farmers, hid their money and treasures when the Normans spread. For 20 years—the contemporary English writers fully confirm Ordericus—the torture of these folk by the Norman Knights, bishops, and abbots forms, as I said, one of the most sordid chapters in history. Cutting off noses, lips, and other spare parts proved too mild, and the conquerors vied with the Chinese in devising tortures. Stubborn abbots and abbesses who would not bring out the gold and silver vessels of the

altar were stripped, smeared with honey, and pegged out in the open air for the bees, wasps hornets, and ants. Merchants who hid their coin were thrown into foul vaults with adders and toads (then believed to be poisonous). Men were hung up by their thumbs or their genitals or made to stand for hours in wet shirts in a freezing wind. Nobles took delight in inventing new tortures and watching the infliction of them. Whole communities of monks were burned alive in their monasteries. Noble ladies tortured the breasts and more delicate parts of nuns. This Norman rule ended in a civil war, and there were 10 years of worse disorders. You might be hung by the feet over a slow fire of dry dung; you might have cords drawn tight around the skull (a torture invented by a high noble.) Red-hot iron plates were applied to the soles of the feet, or a man was crushed into a box lined with sharp stones, or have a collar with spikes piercing inward put round his neck, or be starved to death, or have a terrible weight laid on his chest. That was the stage that Christendom had reached at the culmination of the Dark Age, which was not at all a Dark Age, and in the first century of the Age of Chivalry; and these Norman knights were considered the finest in Europe.

#### 4. SADISM IN THE GAY RENAISSANCE

We now see the fallacy of the legal writers who, confining themselves to what they find in codes of law, make much of the severe tortures in Roman law—not, as a rule, mentioning the restrictions that were gradually introduced—then find little torture in Europe until the ordeal is abolished and the judicial processes of Roman law are restored. During the six or seven centuries about which they say so little Europe saw far more torture and mutilation than the world had ever seen before. The knights and barons of Italy and Germany were no more humane than those of England and France, and the mass of the people not less brutalized. But the misrepresentation of this first

half of the Middle Ages is almost less guilty than the plea that once the ordeal was suppressed—and it is false, we saw, that the Papacy suppressed it—processes of law had to be sought in the Roman code and, as these prescribed torture, it was now adopted in law. Henry II of England suppressed the ordeal in that country in the 12th century; not from humane motives, for he was a ferocious monarch, but because it was much more profitable to him to have courts and levy fines. But when it is said that the restoration of law naturally meant the restoration of Roman torture the reader is misled. Froissart, the historian of chivalry, describes a scene in England in 1326. Before a crowd



of citizens, and apparently in the presence of the queen and her ladies, one of the chief nobles was thus executed:

"First his privy parts were cut off. . . . They were cast into a large fire kindled close to him; afterwards his heart was thrown into the same fire."

Imagine that bestiality in ancient Rome! Torture or mutilation was not sanctioned in English law, we are told, until long afterwards. Yet we have here a court ordering a torture viler than any known to the Romans. Abelard, the brilliant French scholar of the early 12th century, claimed as a matter of right in law that the Paris Court should inflict the same mutilation on Canon Fulbert (who had had Abelard castrated), and it was in fact inflicted on his hirelings.

While, therefore, the legal writer may claim that he is concerned only with codes of law, he must not be quoted as an authority on social history or the character of any age. The whole of Christendom, West and East, was foul with torture throughout the Dark Age. But in the last chapter we passed beyond the Dark Age, which is not supposed to go beyond the year 1100 at the latest, yet found torture in England, Normandy, and France, were worse than ever. Abelard's tragedy was in 1118, yet at that late date we find this most vicious of mutilations—remember that there was practically no surgery, and infected clay or hot pitch was used to stop the bleeding—in the circle of cathedral canons and professors. In England we saw the orgy of torment by nobles and knights continuing as late as the date of Magna Carta (1215).

In fact, it is the most painful feature of this history of torture that it was not merely worse in the Christian Era than in any of the older civilizations but worse in the later Middle Ages, which the Catholic writer represents as the shining model of what a civilization ought to be, than in the Dark Age, and was in its ugliest forms used in the interest of religion; first by Catholics in the Inquisition, then by Protestants in the persecution of witches. As it was coupled everywhere with an aggressive sexuality

we may safely conclude that the world then witnessed the widest spread of sadism that has ever been known. Many even of the Inquisitors were clearly sadists, as more than one writer observes, and we have already seen that in the knightly class both men and women gloated over torture. We shall find the same in the horrible tortures used in the Italian Renaissance and in later periods in France and England.

The narrow limits of this little book do not permit me to cover the whole of Christendom, in which Russia with its Ivan the Terrible is included after the 10th century, or follow the Crusaders to Palestine, and I must be content to give a short account of three terrible manifestations of cruelty and torture on which all authorities are agreed—the knights of the Age of Chivalry, the princes and people of the Italian Renaissance, and the Inquisition. In the last chapter I described the Norman knights and their leaders and "ladies." It must not be supposed that here we have the exceptional cruelty of conquerors bent on exploiting an alien land. I explained that that was their character in Normandy before they set sail for England and remained their character as long as the Norman line lasted. It was the common character of the knights of Europe from beginning to end of the Age of Chivalry (1100-1400) which to them meant only the Age of Cavalry (*Chevalerie* or horsemen). In my last book, "The Evolution of the law of Chastity," I quoted the leading authorities on each country in those three centuries describing them as amazingly deficient, in both sexes, in respect for the Church's moral code. The same authorities are agreed about their cruelty. That "gentle" and perfect "knight" Sir Philip Sydney, and a few others whose character is justly admired by historians, lived long after the Age of Chivalry had closed. Guizot, the distinguished French Protestant historian, said a century ago of this period:

"When we look at the state of manners in these three centuries . . . the epoch is without doubt one of the most brutal

in our history, one of those in which we meet with the greatest amount of crime and violence."

The highest modern authority, Professor Luchaire says in Lavisse's standard "History of France," that it was "a world of superstitions and brutal soldiers" and "the chate-laine whom history and poetry describe in the 11th century is almost always a virago of violent character." In his special study of the end of that century and first half of the 12th he says that the higher knight or baron "remained almost everywhere a brutal and pillaging soldier." We have seen the character of their cousins of Normandy. For England in the Norman and later period Professor Halpham says in the "Cambridge Medieval History":

"Everywhere the barons perpetrated the same excesses, and these usually consisted, not only in robbing merchants and pilgrims, but also in fleecing the peasant, in seizing their wine, corn and cattle, and in pillaging the property of the churches and abbeys." (V. 593).

Of the German nobility "the leading authority in English H. A. L. Fisher, says:

"The thickest strand of their existence was woven of cruelty, perfidy and vice. . . . In most cases their comitatus (band of knights and men) was little better than a band of robbers (The Medieval Empire," I, 342, etc.)

In Germany princes, bishops and lord-abbots belonged more frequently than elsewhere to this igno-bel company. It was the same in Spain according to all authorities, but my space for quotation here is limited. Let me give one more. The romantic writer on chivalry, Corn-ish, himself says of the combined European knights who are supposed to have piously responded to the "call of the cross":

"The heroes of the First Crusade were no exception to the rule of fierceness and even ferocity with which we are familiar in the history of the Norman Kings ("Chivalry," 114).

They were worse in the later crusades, worse again in the crusade

against the Albigensians, while of the Catholic imperial crusade against the corrupt Popes and Rome in the 16th century the classical historian of the city, which German and Spanish knights and their men devastated in 1527, Gregorovius says:

"The plundering of Rome in the barbaric days of Alaric and Genseric (the Hun and Vandal leaders) must be called humane in comparison with the horrors, perpetrated by the army of Charles V (a good Catholic)."

But there is no dispute about the character of the knights, who are still such models of virtue in our Sunday Schools that hundreds of thousands of modern American men proudly call themselves "Knights" (of Columbus).

These men dominated Europe during the three beautiful centuries when the great cathedrals arose and the great artists and the universities appeared. Their princes, who did not need to earn their living by brigandage, rarely restrained them and often imitated them. Their women applauded when they did not actively cooperate. Professor Luchaire, after describing how the great Knight Bernard de Cahusac cut off the hands and feet and cut out the eyes of 150 monks and nuns in one of the bi-sexual monasteries because they produced no treasure, goes on to describe how Bernard's "noble" wife, who was with him, slashed open the breasts and tore out the nails of the nuns. Remember, further, that each knight, if he was a land-owner with castle or manor, had hundreds, in some cases, thousands of foot soldiers, and day by day they wandered over the country robbing and torturing abbots, pilgrims, merchants, etc., on the roads and monks and nuns in their convents. That may give you a new angle on the Ages of Faith. But do not forget that they had compensation, as the Seventh Commandment was suspended as well as the Sixth and Eighth.

But we have so far considered only one aspect of the brutality or sadism of the pious Middle Ages. A second, the horrible use of torture by princes, is seen at its worst in Italy, which I have not included in

the above because, not being a unified nation with a single ruler, Italy had no body of chivalrous knights corresponding to those of Germany, France, and England. You might say that the lack was supplied to some extent by the commanders of "free companies"; knights of other countries who enlisted private armies and hired them out to cities or regional rulers in the incessant wars. They were all good Catholics, though they fought just as cheerfully against the Pope as for him and demanded only complete freedom to rob, rape, torture, or murder civilians as well as soldiers. One such was the English knight, Sir John Hawkwood, and it will be enough to quote the words of the chaste Dictionary of National Biography:

"For their raiding expeditions (between wars) the White Company usually chose the night, when they would burst like a deluge on the town, massacre the men, violate the women, carry off whatever was valuable and portable, and set fire to whatever they left behind."

Bands of outlaws in America's Wild West days were playful in comparison with these companies (small armies)! You may think that the Papal court would not grant them this license when it employed them. Listen. It was the conduct of a Papal army under Cardinal Robert of Geneva, whom he had been hired to help, that finally turned Hawkwood's stomach and drove him and his men back to England. The Cardinal's army took Cesena in 1377. They closed the gates to prevent escape, and they then spent three days and nights butchering the 30,000 inhabitants, men, women and children.

History is now written in such style that the modern reader has not the remotest idea of the true character of those folk of the "glorious" Middle Ages. We saw how the success of the Stoic moralists and lawyers in reducing torture was checked by the action of the emperors in making treachery against themselves the greatest crime in the calendar. Italy now, from the 12th century, had a score of regional rulers who applied this moral code

with ferocity. Ancient Rome is reproached with having produced a Nero: Catholic Italy produced a hundred Neros, and all the classic writers on the Renaissance (Sismondi, Burckhardt, Symons, Gregorovius, etc.) fill their pages with tortures. Bernabo Visconti, Duke of Milan in the 14th century, was a great hunter. The people had to keep his 5,000 hounds and they lost a hand or a foot if one of the dogs fell ill, lost their eyes if they killed a bear, and had their houses burned if they failed to pay the tax for the cost of his hunts. For quite small offenses men were burned or buried alive. When the Pope learned that he treated priests the same as lawyers, he sent two priests to deliver a bill of excommunication to the brute. Bernabo met them on a bridge, and, looking down at the water, asked them whether they would prefer to eat or to drink. They ate the Papal bull, seals included. Bernabo and his brother invented the Quaresima: a schedule of torture and mutilation that was calculated to keep the victim just alive for 40 days (in memory of the Church's Lent). Bernabo ruled for 30 years, and in some respects his nephew then surpassed him. He used to hunt the citizens with his ferocious hounds. He was religious, and the people sent him to heaven at the age of 24. His son greatly enlarged his principality by lying to other rulers about their wives or relations. He got his own wife to accuse herself, under torture, of misconduct and burned her. He got the Duke of Ferrara, by similar lies, to burn his wife and nephew. He secured half a dozen murders in the Scala family. But he was a warm friend of the Pope.

The Sforza family, which succeeded the Visconti, maintained their regime of terror and torture. The second in power was murdered by the people in church during Mass for his "abominable crimes." The next was poisoned by his uncle, who was a man of cynical bestiality. He took any woman of noble family that caught his fancy, handed her over to his grooms when he had raped her, and made public boast of what he did. If any openly murmured he forced them to eat their

own dung until they died. His people murdered him in church—the only place, as a rule, in which they got near their dictators. The Baglioni of Perugia made the cathedral their headquarters. After consulting a santly nun they hanged 130 of their opponents in front of it and had Masses said for their souls for three days. In 1500—you see, we are covering three centuries of this barbarism—the rival family murdered the Baglioni at a banquet, a common opportunity for such things, and piously purified the cathedral by washing it with wine. At Siena the despot's chief form of entertainment was to roll great stones down a mountain crushing the peasants like flies. There was hardly a city in Italy that had not at least a spell of this foulness. In Rome sometimes it was nephews or bastards of the Popes who led the revels. It reacted on the people. A worker in one city innocently caused the death of the son of a neighbor. Apparently in a forgiving spirit the neighbor invited him to supper and put rich meat before him; and told him at the close that it was a joint from the body of his own son, whom he had murdered. A cardinal had the eyes of his brother cut out because they looked too fondly on his (the cardinal's) beautiful mistress. In the Holy City the civil authorities still, after 1500, for certain crimes condemned a man to lose his sex-parts and carry them on a pole through the streets.

I have not space to do more than give a few illustrations without which general statements might be received with incredulity, and I must be still briefer about other countries. "We Italians," wrote Machiavelli, "are irreligious and corrupt above all others because the Church and its representatives set up the worst example." I doubt if the Italians surpassed some of the Catholic Spanish Kingdoms in regard to cruelty and torture. Our history-writers and romanticists tell us that Spain produced one of the most fragrant flowers of chivalry in the Cid. The man sold his sword indifferently to Moslem and Christian, and at the siege of Valencia he tortured (for hidden treasure) and burned as blithely as any Norman.

Yet one of the most pretentious recent histories of Spain, by Louis Bertrand and Sir Charles Petric, devotes 20 pages to "the virile virtues of the noble Castilian." As to such rulers as Jaime the Conqueror—of whom it was said that he built 2,000 churches and had the same number of mistresses—Pedro the Cruel, etc., my ink is already running red and I fear the reader will be sick. For France and England it is enough to recall that they now had their Hundred Years War, in which, as in Italy and Germany, a conqueror would close the gates of a town (of timber houses) and burn it and its whole population.

You are tempted to think that in these three "glorious" centuries, as Professor Maritain would call them, an epidemic of sadism raged in Europe, but you will remember that the third and worst feature of torture at this time was that it was used in the interest of religion. Even the Inquisition is whitewashed by our kindly modern writers, while in our chief encyclopedias—the Britannica, the Americana and the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics—the article on it is provided by Catholics and is as reliable as Churchill's speeches on Bolshevism. H. C. Lea's fine work on the institution is not now easily consulted, while of the two smaller works, that by Sir A. Cardew is negligible and that of Prof. S. Turberville ("Medieval Heresy and the Inquisition," 1920) is not quite satisfactory. The result is that while a man must be profoundly ignorant not to have heard at least of the Spanish Inquisition few know the truth about it and they are easily duped by Catholic and pro-Catholic writers.

Here I have little space, and it will be most useful if I just correct the lies about it that are now current. From the 4th century onward the Church persecuted heretics. Indeed, for that extraordinary prevalence of torture in the Christian Era which, taken together with the sexual robustness and freedom we feel inclined to call sadism, two things are largely responsible. One is the doctrine of eternal punishment. If, it was natural to reason, God punishes men with eternal torment, it is surely lawful for men to

use doses of it in a good cause. The second is that under the new religion the worst of all crimes was to endanger a man's eternal salvation, so the Church seized on heresy as the worst vice. As I said, civil rulers made treason the most terrible crime, justifying torture. Heresy, said the Popes, is treason to God and his Vicars on earth. During the long Dark Age this principle had comparatively little application. Culture was at so low a level that heresy was rare. From about 1100 culture improved and heretics multiplied. The calendar is fouled here and there with the burning of batches of heretics, and within 100 years the Inquisition—or a tribunal that “searched” (as the name means) for heretics as well as tried them—was founded.

The first lie about it is that “princes and peoples” begged or compelled the Church to move against heretics. Doubtless preachers or bishops here and there did urge their people to act against obvious heretics, but Helbing quotes prince after prince (Louis XI, Philip le Bel, etc.) and even bishops complaining to the Pope about the cruelty (I.110) and we still wait for quotation of documents in which “princes and peoples” beg Rome to act. The Inquisition, Helbing says, was “hated everywhere,” the Inquisitors often required a guard. There was, in fact, no need for the Church to wait for requests: a point which is too often forgotten. Heretics had been burned in Spain in the 5th century, and when a local bishop disapproved and appeal was made to Rome, the “great” Pope Leo I (in his XVII and CXII Letters in Migne) said that this was just and legal. The chief heresy that spread in the 12th century, culminating in the extensive seat of the Albigensians, was similar to this, a modification of the ancient Manicheanism, and sentence of death was already provided in the church-law when Pope Lucius III and the Council of Verona urged it on the French authorities in 1184. What Pope Innocent III and the Lateran Council did in 1215 was, as I have said, not to forbid trial by ordeal and so open the doors to torture but to demand that heretics be search-

ed out and executed. Roman law waited for a man to be reliably accused of crime. The order to search was the fundamental source of one half of its horror and injustice. Later Popes of the 13th century completed the structure. Gregory IX, who forced the skeptical Frederick II to include it in his laws (he never applied it) at the price of his crown, entrusted the work to the fanatical Dominican friars, and Innocent IV and in 1252 authorized the use of torture.

Thus by the middle of the 13th century the horrible plague spread over Italy, France, Germany, Austria and Portugal. Spain was still for the most part Moslem, and England never admitted the Inquisition. A terror seized a town or village when the banner of the monks, heading their procession, approached. Our encyclopedia writers are permitted to say that its procedure “marks a substantial advance on the contemporary administration of justice and therefore in the general civilization of mankind,” which is quite the most audacious lie they tell about it. The way was prepared for them by the clergy inviting folk to denounce secret heretics, and to make it still easier for a man to vent a deadly spite on a neighbor with whom he had quarreled, a box was put in the church into which anonymous charges might be put. No accused ever saw or knew his accuser, and no lawyer dare defend him or he in turn was suspected.

Further to stimulate the lodging of charges the property of the accused was divided between the accuser, the court, and the local authority. It was an actual incitement to crime and a monstrous perversion of justice. Bernard Shaw's version of the trial of Joan of Arc in his play is a ridiculous fantasy. A man was accused to the friars—the Franciscan friars soon broke the rich monopoly of the Dominicans—and they tortured him until he “confessed.” Few escaped burning once they were accused. In vaults deep underground beneath their palaces the victims were tortured with the rack, the thumb screws, the Spanish boots (for crushing the bones of the feet), being pressed on a spiked board or chair, hung up

by the wrists or arms, often with a heavy weight tied to the feet, for hours, tight cords round the limbs or the head, boiling oil, pitch, or lead, red-hot irons or fire applied to the feet or hands, flogging, hunger, or deprivation of sleep. In some places the Iron Maiden, a figure that closed arms on the victim and pressed him on a spiked breast, seems to have been used, as a few such machines still exist. In England a "Scavenger's Daughter" (or machine invented by Skeffington) doubled up the victim until the blood poured from his nose. In the persecution of the Waldensians in the 17th century bags of gunpowder were fired in the mouth. Immense numbers of innocent men and women, especially if they were just folk with property to divide, must have accused themselves in their agony and passed from the hell of the torture-chamber to the flames. So Europe lived from 1250 to the 17th or 18th century; in Spain, Portugal, Papal and Neapolitan Italy, and Spanish America until the 19th. And our learned and professedly impartial Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics pays the penalty of employing a Catholic apologist by assuring readers that this was an advance in civilization!

A minor lie is that at least the Roman Inquisition never killed any. Documents describe the burning of heretics in batches. Another is that recent historians have disproved the statement of Llorente, once Secretary of the Spanish Inquisition (and possessor of its Archives) and the highly respected Vicar General of a Spanish diocese, that in Spain alone the victims of the Inquisition

numbered 341,042—the Americana makes his figure 31,000—for no non-Catholic historian has even attempted to do so. It is a lie that at all events these Inquisitors were devout and upright men guided only by their religion. As Llorente says, many used their office not only to get wealth but to secure harems of girls on the threat of torture. Helbing tells how, when the French troops conquered Aragon, the 400 victims they released included 60 beautiful girls, from the age of 15 upwards, who were the harem of the chief Inquisitors. And our modern Catholics crown their tawdry and mean defense of this diabolical institution by suavely observing that all that the Church did was to ascertain whether an accused was or was not a heretic and that when it found that he was and handed him over to "the secular arm" it had no further responsibility. All these ghastly tortures that made Europe foul for so many centuries preceded the handing over to the civil authorities, as they well know but seem to hope that the general public do not understand. These fearful instruments of torture, still preserved in European museums, did their work in the dungeons of the Inquisition. The final stage, the burning in the market-place, was almost a mercy in comparison. But to such a low level public instruction in history has been dragged by fear of Catholics or seeking their favor in America (particularly) that the most barbaric mechanism that priests ever used to protect their power is now represented to readers as "an advance in civilization."

## 5. NO REFORM AT THE REFORMATION

Such was the real character of Europe during that long period of time, from the days when the first Gothic cathedrals soared into the skies, the first universities were opened, and the orders of the humble, bare-footed friars were founded, to the days of Luther and Calvin: The period which Catholic professors in American universities now represent as so ideal that we

must save civilization by restoring the power of their Church, and other professors—assist the deception by concealing the facts. Professor Westermarck, an eminent anthropologist, who knew all about whatever torture there was among what we call savages but was far from realizing the horrible extent of torture in Europe from the Norman Conquest to the 17th century,

nevertheless says in his "Origin and Development of Moral Ideas" (I 523):

"In medieval Christendom it (torture) was made use of to an extent and with a cold-blooded ferocity unknown to any heathen nation."

Understand that we do not search the byways of history for our facts. They are in every chapter of every standard authority on each country and each period of the Catholic Middle Ages. Against Catholic writers we justly make a point of the general and boisterous sexual freedom, particularly among clerics, monks, and nuns, since chastity was the Church's supreme command. To us moderns that is just a charge of hypocrisy. But whether you follow the social or any other theory of morals, cruelty is the supreme sin, and in no other age in the history of the world was it so widespread, callous, and fiendish, in civil and ecclesiastical law as well as in personal conduct, as it was in the period which is now pressed on millions of children in American schools and youth in the colleges as the ideal stage of civilization.

The only truthful retort that the Catholic apologist can make is, not to accuse us of misrepresentation, for all the masters of history give the facts, but a peevish protest that the Reformation made no change. It is literally true that this monstrous epidemic, in civil and ecclesiastical law and social life, continued unabated through the 16th century. In one respect, we shall see, Luther's ideas led to an increase of cruelty. Not from him or Calvin came the first condemnation of torture, but from the skeptical Montaigne, whose gentle counsels, supported by no organization, had to work slowly and gradually on the mind of Europe. The use of torture had by this time become as normal a feature of life as the maintenance of slavery was to the southern states of America until Lincoln's great challenge. But the Reformation did break the tyranny of the arch-torturer, the Papacy, and create, unwittingly, the conditions of some freedom of thought. In England the death-sentence for heresy was abandoned in the 17th

century and the divines were told to deal with their heretics by painless spiritual methods. The volume of torture began to contract. The world was being prepared for the effective attack on it of the Voltaireans of the 18th century.

But the fact remains that there was no change at the Reformation. Hitherto the real crime of heresy, setting aside the pretenses of the priests, had been that it threatened the power, the wealth, and the free and luxurious life of the Popes and the clergy generally. Protestantism now won by force of arms the right to defy Rome; by a military struggle in Germany and France that culminated in the success of the Thirty Years War (1618-48). But the tortures remained in the civil courts, there was no notable change in social life, and the Protestants set up their own standard of orthodoxy and at first guarded it as truculently as ever. I have always pointed out in my historical works that historians have no sound ground for saying that the Middle Ages ended and Modern Times began in the 16th century. Modern Times have not yet begun. We have been living in the slow dawn of a really new age since the French Revolution; but I would almost make an act of faith and say that the sun will be above the horizon before the end of this century.

It was Luther's vivid belief in the devil, which I described in my recent "History of Satanism," (Haldeman-Julius, 25c) that prolonged the use of torture in the religious sphere. The Roman Church had, of course, vigorously prosecuted witches ever since Pope Gregory IX, in a letter to the bishops, repeated all the medieval superstitions about these followers of Satan, and the persecution increased after the Bull of Pope Innocent VIII in 1484. The German Inquisitors had asked his advice, and the wits of Rome, which was just then passing into its most luxurious corruption, were amused. They called the Pope "Octo Noceus" (the "Eighth Criminal") by a pun on his Latin title. Under the lead of his bastards the college of cardinals was becoming a gang of criminals and what the Church called liberties. But, says Helbing, "the per-



secution of witches in the grand style" did not start until after the Reformation. From about 1550 to 1670 hundreds of thousands of them were tortured and burned. Under Luther's influence all Germany began to look for the devil in every bush and every bellyache. Certainly there was, as I have repeatedly shown, an organized cult of Satan. The Church had, in practice, encouraged such an appreciation of sex-pleasure, while holding in its theological manuals that it was a peculiarly diabolical pleasure, that vast numbers of men and women, loathing the prevailing hypocrisy, concluded that they must give thanks to the Good Spirit that sent them joy, rather than to the God who demanded that they curse sex.

Catholic and Protestant authorities alike joined in the orgy of brutality, for men, women and children—I explained that mothers dedicated even their babies to the cult—who were charged or denounced were tortured in the ghastly ways I have described and then burned alive. In the Catholic diocese of Trier (Treves) 368 were burned in 1585-6. At Protestant Nordlingen hundreds were tortured and many burned three years later. At Paderborn 600 were burned in 1625. In one small town of Alsace (the worst province) 136 women were burned in five years. In the archbishopric of Strassburg 5,000 were burned between 1615 and 1625; and this was just the period when the country suffered appallingly from the barbarities of the Thirty Years War. The prince-abbot of Fulda had 250 cruelly tortured and burned in 1603-6. From Cologne to the Tyrol the fires burned fiercely. And the range of victims was, as I have said, amazing. In my "History of Satanism" I quoted a letter by the chancellor of the Bishop of Wurtzburg describing how at the time he wrote 400 were on the list of the accused, including clerics, counsellors, doctors, city officials, a dean, 40 students for the priesthood, the cathedral notary (who had already been tortured), 300 children of three and four years of age, and "a third of the city." He had seen a beautiful girl of 19, "with the highest repute for virtue," put

to death; "seven or eight others of the fairest" were to follow, and children of 10 to 15. This was in 1629, during the horrors of the war. Helbing quotes a similar letter by a priest of Bamberg in 1659. The victims here included the bishop's chancellor and his son and daughter, many officials (who had occasionally dined at the bishop's table), 22 girls of from 7 to 10 (all burned) and "children out of the schools." At Cologne the victims included professors, priests, 80 seminary students, boys of good family aged 9 to 15, and even the bishop's chancellor and his wife. This letter was written to Count Werner of Saxony in 1620. And the American professor (Burr) who edits H. C. Lea's "Notes on Witchcraft" tells folk that there never was a witch-cult.

It was, as I showed in my "History of Satanism," as bad in the South of France, and it was worse, under the influence of Calvin, in Switzerland. The Geneva authorities declared in 1645 that every jail in the city was full, and every torture-chamber was busy. We read of repeated complaints in these days that torturers were overworked. The holy campaign spread to Scotland and England. James VI of Scotland, later James I of England, was a devout Protestant and he decided to make his country as pure as Germany. Of the general state of the country Andrew Lang says in his "History of Scotland" (II, 378):

"As to the public morals of the age, a whole generation after the Reformation, every page of this book testifies to their unspeakable iniquity."

He gives a piquant illustration of the state of both countries. The English captured a Scottish ship called "The Grace of God" and they cut out the eyes and cut off the fingers and ears of the captain and crew. In the last 10 years of the reign of James VI 8,000 men and women were burned in Scotland, and the persecution lasted 40 years (1560-1600). In 1603 James was called to the throne of England and he took his Bible (Sermon on the Mount included) with him and stirred up the search for witches, which Elizabeth had lamentably neglected.



By 1680, Traill's authoritative "Social England" says, 70,000 supposed witches had been tortured or executed in England under James' laws. The historian calls it "the most pronounced outburst of cruelty in English history." The pietists in the Commonwealth Parliament engaged a rustic witch-finder named Hopkins. He said that "the devil's mark" was a third teat, and his soldiers had a great time looking for it on nude women. If a woman had some sort of mark she was dragged by a rope across a pond to see if she floated at the surface; a lingering trace of which practice in the early 19th century was the "ducking stool" for scolds. It is probably from this time that the English got the idea that a witch is always some aged, shrivelled, and crooked old dame; an odd conception of the devil's taste.

From England, as every reader will know, the religious craze spread to New England, and the Puritans of Massachusetts had a pious orgy. Helbing, after surveying the holocausts of hundreds of thousands in Europe, makes light of this American outbreak, and according to Bancroft only 20 were hanged at Salem and 55 tortured. By that time the witch cult was broken and several European scholars were urging that the whole campaign was based on a libel of unattractive but inoffensive old women. But torture survived in civil law everywhere and wherever there was a religious conflict sectarian zeal gave it great ferocity. Helbing selects as the most appalling of instances the Catholic extermination of the Waldensians in the South of France and Switzerland at the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th century and the struggle of the Spaniards to extinguish Protestantism in Holland. A large body of strict evangelical Christians had settled in Provence and built up a thriving colony. Cardinal de Tournon, on instructions from Rome, egged the King against them and the Pope sent 1,000 infantry under a Papal Legate to help. Except 700 strong men who were selected to serve in the royal galleys the whole Waldensian colony was wiped out and with infamous brutality. Not

less brutal had been the treatment by the Inquisition, under the Spanish King, of the Protestants in the Netherlands. It lasted 80 years, and the combination of religious and political revolt drove the Spaniards to frenzy. The King condemned the whole population, including the children, to death, and every engine of torture was brought into use. In England the Quakers were brutally treated, refined and delicate women being flogged at the tail of a cart through the town. In Ireland the Catholics devised horrible tortures for Protestants, and the English soldiers were not gentle in retort.

Torture was still, as I said, recognized in civil law nearly 2,000 years after Cicero had denounced it. At Paris, for instance, which in the 17th and 18th centuries considered itself the summit of civilization, two ghastly tortures were admitted in law—the water-torture (pouring as much as 10 quarts of water into the body of a woman until she nearly burst) and the Spanish boots (for crushing the bones of the lower parts of the legs). In the reign of Louis, "the Sun King," when there was an outbreak of poisoning and Satanism, these tortures were used hundreds of times. Worse torture was recognized and used in the provinces. The spirit of torture still moved men so deeply that in the case of what were considered exceptional crimes—treason—new tortures were invented. When Ravailac in 1610 assassinated Henri IV his breast and limbs were torn with red-hot hooks, his right hand was burned off, molten lead, sulphur and boiling oil were poured over his wounds, and at the end of two hours of torture his body was torn asunder by four horses. The same torture and death were given to Damiens when, in 1757, he attempted (and failed) to assassinate Louis XV. On both occasions the savagery was perpetrated in the largest square before the entire city, both sexes and all ages, while the richer ladies outbid each other for places at the best windows overlooking the square. So it was in delicate Spain, in Italy, in England, and other countries. People made picnics of the most brutal floggings and executions. But all that our

generation knows about such horrors is that—so it was said—some of the poor and densely ignorant women of Paris, treated like cattle for centuries, sat knitting their stock-

ings at the foot of the gallows during the French Revolution. They do not even know that when the reaction came the fine lady embroiderers replaced the ignorant knitters.

## 6. VOLTAIRE EDUCATES THE WORLD

Even some freethinking readers must have been surprised by my statement at the beginning of this book that torture, the ugliest vice of the human animal, was far worse in the Christian Era than in any pagan civilization, and that it was worst in the second part of the Middle Ages, from the high level of virtue of which our materialistic age is understood to have degenerated. There is little skeptical literature of importance of the last 100 years that I have not read, yet I do not remember that any work pointedly states this deeply significant fact. In the preceding three chapters I have sufficiently proved it and shown that though they do not care to draw attention to the social-religious implication, all the real authorities on European history in its various periods and countries tell the facts as I have repeated them. Instead of three short chapters I could have filled a stout volume with the facts, especially relating to the much vaunted period from 1100 to 1700 A.D. But it would be nauseating. Any reader who wants a more realistic picture must try to see Helbing's "Die Tortur." It contains a hundred terrible wood-cuts from medieval works and paintings. And before I quit this survey let me repeat that the recent and large histories of Europe that are used in American schools and colleges do not give the pupil or the general reader the dimmest suspicion that this sadistic cruelty was an outstanding feature of life in the Middle Ages. As long as we have Roman apologists claiming that medieval Christendom was an ideal civilization and that we in our distracted world ought to turn back to its religious inspiration—as long as these sectarian sophists are allowed to compel our literature, encyclopedias, press, and colleges to omit these facts—history is prostituted in the service of priestcraft.

The last part of my thesis, that it was Voltaire and his followers who reformed Europe, will be hardly less surprising to those who do not realize the influence of the great French skeptics of the 18th century, and would be derided by those who have been taught that Voltaire led the way of the modern world to perdition. But I can at once quote a striking testimony to this. The article on Torture in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* was, as I said, originally written by a moderate religious professor and was revised in the last edition by Professor Keeton. We saw that he made alterations that are more favorable to religion than conducive to truth. But he did not venture to interfere with Professor William's list of eight men who had the greatest share in making Europe sensible of its shame and securing the abandonment, in law, of the use of torture. Those names—and it is usual to give them in this connection—are Montaigne, Bayle, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Beccaria, Sonnenfels, Verri, and Manzoni. All are skeptics of the same type as Voltaire, and, although the first two preceded Voltaire, the last four at least were humanists under his influence, and the title I give to this chapter may be allowed.

In fact, if we confine ourselves to the men who did not merely condemn torture but had an effective share in getting it abolished, my claim is strictly correct. Montaigne, the famous skeptical essayist of the 16th century, finely protested (*Essay* XIX, "The Worst of Vices," in the cheap edition) against the use of torture, but it was not abandoned in judicial use in any country until two centuries later. Bayle's *Dictionary* appeared a century later and was less outspoken in this regard. Baron de Montesquieu, the most famous jurist of his age, was a contemporary of Voltaire and had

the same views. While the world-circulation of his great work, "The Spirit of the Laws," had an immense gradual influence on legal and political reform generally, he had in this particular issue nothing like the influence of Voltaire and the Voltaireans. Frederick the Great was the first ruler to remove torture from the Prussian code, in 1740, and he was already under the influence of the French skeptics. Catherine the Great in Russia—a Deist like all the others and particularly influenced by the Agnostic Diderot who, like Catherine, ought to be in the above list—followed in 1769; though her pious successors reintroduced torture, maintained it until 1906, and were among the vilest torturers of the 19th century. Portugal was next, in 1776, and the King was directed in this by the cordial friend and pupil of Voltaire, the Marquis de Pombal, who again ought to be included in the list of great abolitionists. The French Revolutionists immediately abolished torture when they destroyed the Bastille in 1789; and in the same year Joseph II of Austria abolished it—to be restored later by the clericals—in his empire. This then included North Italy, and it was the work of the Austrian jurist Sonnenpels and the Italian Beccaria and Verri—all Voltaireans—that moved the nominally Catholic but anti-papal emperor. The Deistic poet Manzoni, grandson of Beccaria, belongs to the 19th century and made noble protests against the revival of torture by the reactionary monarchs and clerics after the fall of Napoleon.

Thus, while not one single ecclesiastical leader or theologian from Augustine onward had protested against the use of torture—Thomas Aquinas endorsed it as readily as Augustine and Luther did—the humanist skeptical movement of the 18th century protested, by the pen of all its leaders, against the abomination and secured the abandonment of it in half of Europe; in fact since the troops of the French Revolution destroyed the dungeons of the Inquisition and dethroned the feudal monarchs in Italy and Spain also, these "Atheists" of the 18th century who are now

held up to opprobrium, wiped out, in most of the world, the appalling blot on civilization which the churches had more than tolerated for 14 centuries. The North American code had excluded torture from the first days of the new republic, and in the course of the first quarter of the 19th century the anti-clerical leaders of revolt in Spanish America abolished the Inquisition and brought their civilization up to the Voltairean level. And the only reference to this humane revolution in the Catholic Encyclopedia, which has no article on Torture, is that "after the horrors of the French Revolution the methods of punishment were greatly softened." That is probably, in its implication, the most comprehensive lie in that arsenal of lies.

In launching the great campaign nearly half a century before the French Revolution, Frederick had said: "I dare to take the side of humanity against a custom that is a disgrace to Christianity and civilization." That was 50 years before the Revolution. It was the sentiment of Catherine when she abolished torture 20 years before the Revolution, of Pombal when he got it abolished in Portugal in 1776, of the King of Sweden when he struck it out of the code of law in 1786. And as there were no "horrors" of the French Revolution until 1793, and the revolutionaries and Joseph II had abolished torture in 1789, the greater part of the civilized world had denounced and suppressed the infamy long before that time. But the most monstrous feature of this Catholic lie—in an encyclopedia that promises the American public the cream of modern culture with perfect candor—is that as soon as the Pope and the reactionary monarchs recovered power after the fall of Napoleon they restored torture in all its grisly forms instead of "softening" it. When the Catholic historian Lord Acton called the Popes "wholesale assassins" and "worse than accomplices of the Old Man of the Mountains" it was the Papacy of the 19th century that he had in mind; and Acton was an aristocrat not a radical.

I have shown in other works—and here the Cambridge Modern His-

tory, indisputably the highest authority on the period, fully states the facts—that within half a century of the fall of Napoleon at least a quarter of a million men, women and children were done to death, mostly in horrible circumstances, and further hundreds of thousands vilely tortured, in two small states with a total population of less than 10,000,000: two states in which the French revolutionaries and their allies had suppressed torture. Those two states were the Papal Kingdom in Central Italy and the Kingdom of Naples, which was under the closest spiritual direction of the Popes. The contemporary and Catholic General Colletta claims far more victims in South Italy than I am alleging; and for the infamy of the Pope's jails and the tortures practiced in them until the wicked Italians took over in 1870 and civilized the Papal States, see the appalling details in Felice Orsini's "Austrian Dungeons in Italy" (1855), which includes his experiences in the squalid Papal dungeons. But Austria, which had now lost the liberal spirit of Joseph II and drawn closer to Rome, shared the brutality—see Silvio Pellico's famous work "My Prisons"—and after the failure of the revolutions of 1848 it perpetrated horrors that shocked Britain and America. Catholic Spain and Portugal in which the Inquisition was restored returned to medieval savagery. There had been no reprisals when the people had, under French lead, rejected the absolutism of church and state but when, by the grossest perjury, the clerical royalists recovered power, the best blood of Spain and Portugal was poured out like water, and hundreds of thousands were tortured or driven into exile. Even France, which returned to Catholic rule from 1815 to 1848, returned also at least halfway to medieval savagery.

In almost every case in the last 60 or 70 years of a recrudescence of this savagery it has been under the auspices of a Catholic (Roman or Greek) hierarchy. Largely through the influence of its Holy Synod, which cooperated intimately with the autocratic Czars, Russia brought back its vilest tortures, used them

all through the 19th century, and indulged in an orgy of torture of its rebels as late as 1904-6.

The rigors of the concentration camps for conspirators who would restore the vile old regime, as such conspirators always have done and the White Russians did in their invasion of 1918-19, under the Soviet leaders today, at which the world professes to be deeply shocked—though not one in 100,000 knows the details—are pale beside the horrors which the Czarists committed 40 years ago. Poland had been one of the victims of Czarist savagery throughout the 19th century. When it recovered independence in 1918 and its church returned to power, the Conference of Versailles, to weaken and spite the Bolsheviks, tore the two large provinces of White Russia and the Galician Ukraine from the U.S.S.R. and put them under Poland, and for 20 years the Catholic Poles, with the intimate cooperation of their bishops, tortured the Ukrainians (as well as the Socialists and Protestants in Poland proper). Not one American or British daily in 50 ever mentioned this 20-year persecution, in our own time, of the Ukrainians; and today we see foreign ministers of the great powers offering us as proof of the aggressive designs of the U.S.S.R. the "fact" that it tore two provinces from Poland and they yearn to return to their beloved country! Spain, less than half a century ago, was using the vilest tortures of the Middle Ages, such as drawing cords tight on men's genitals, on rebels against a corrupt monarchy and still more corrupt church and from the little truth that is allowed to reach us from Spain today we gather that Franco and his bishops worthily sustain the ancient glories of the Spanish Inquisition. Portugal is as bad—a fact insidiously suppressed by the papers and politicians—and we have the most reliable evidence that the same vile tortures were in use in the jails of Brazil a few years ago, and probably are (and in other South American lands) today. We have the testimony of the leading prison reformers of Europe that torture was used in the jails of pious Bulgaria and Yugoslavia until the war

placed them under the control of those dreadful Bolsheviks. What happened under the Nazis and the Japanese imperialists, both on good turns with the Pope, need not be recalled here, but I may point out that the destruction of Soviet Russia and its people, by atomic bombs and poison gas, which Catholics and many others so glibly demand in America, would cause, in a day, more torture than has been suffered in a century.

I have told all this at length in earlier works. I have shown also that the death-sentence and "minor punishments" are sanctioned in the Canon Law of Rome today. Catholic propaganda in the United States is one monstrous untruth both as regards the action of their

church in the past and its attitude to torture today. Catholic pressure on historical works and lessons leads to a gross distortion of judgment in regard to the real factors of civilization and enables the press to repeat, with little fear of contradiction, those eulogies of church-influence with which politicians flirt with Catholic voters and the press conciliates Catholic readers and advertisers. Great is truth, many good folk drowsily chant, and it will prevail; then they frown with an air of superiority on those of us who tell such socially important truths as I tell here. Truth never needed strong arms and stout hearts behind it more than it does today.

*Joseph McCabe's Latest Masterpiece of humor, information, criticism—*

# **The Dumbness of the Great**

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